

MEET A BEE GEE

—No. 4 'I'm a bit of a raver' admits

Maurice Gibb

to **ALAN SMITH**

IF I were a film casting director I've a feeling I could visualise Maurice Gibb as the brown-eyed, brown-haired, 5ft. 6in. son of an Indian chief, what with those high cheekbones that dip inwards to give him the lean, hungry, proud look of a brave out to kill wagon-train master who speak with forked tongue.

Maurice sees himself in another light. He would have loved to have been Clyde in "Bonnie And Clyde," playing the Warren Beatty rôle with fervour because it struck him as a real, human thing.

His deep-set eyes light up as he speaks fluently, articulately, about his hopes and his inner thoughts on success and the lifetime stretching in front of him.

"It's a nice idea," he told me, "to talk about things like this once in a while. I like people to know I'm not just a face in a photograph."

The first time I met Maurice he was carrying an old single by Lorraine Ellison, "Stay With Me Baby," which he thrust on to the record player with urgency and delight.

Seconds later I was listening to a full-blooded, screaming, beautiful, agonised, ecstatic, sobbing, sexual, soaring performance of a song that prickles the hairs at the nape of the neck.

Romantic

It was one of the most incredible records I've ever heard, and I raved, Maurice raved, even the man there from the BBC World Service raved. When I heard that Cilla and Lulu were also raving, that was it. My mind was made up. I asked Warner Brothers to rush me a copy as soon as they could, and I raced home and also thrust it on to the record player with urgency and delight.

Lorraine Ellison's "Stay With Me Baby" may now be heard screaming through our house and right out into the road, probably to the great chagrin of our neighbours Ron and Marge on one side, and the nice old boy on the other.

That an emotionally supercharged record like this should appeal to Maurice doesn't surprise me at all. He has a great sense of the romantic and he admits to it readily.

"When I meet a girl," Maurice told me gently, "I treat her as a

girl should be treated. I even go as far as walking on the outside of the pavement. I find I get very romantic, and I don't swear and I treat her with respect.

"I like small girls, preferably blonde, with a sense of humour." When he added that his steady girlfriend was a happy person who was also in show business, I took a calculated guess and asked him did he mean Lulu. This was before news of their romance found its way into the papers.

Maurice's eyes widened with undisguised surprise. "You're right!" he exclaimed, "How did you know?" I shrugged one of my I-just-happen-to-be-a-genius shrugs, and gave him my word I wouldn't break the news.

We talked about many things, Maurice and I. He's quick-witted and cheerful, and his conversation isn't limited to pop music or buying an 'ouse for 'is muvver.

He says he believes in God, but dislikes the hypocrisy of many churchgoers; thinks politics is the biggest bore that ever happened to the world; can't see himself splitting with the other Bee Gees, although he would like to do other things as well; would like everybody in the group to act; is obsessed by cars, although he is still waiting to pass his driving test; has a Rolls-Royce and a Morris Cooper S with "blacked-out" windows and all that—; likes the Bachelors for their professionalism; and says his greatest dream is to own a motion picture company.

Maurice looks back with happy nostalgia on how he and the other Bee Gees were scared stiff at the audition they did for Robert Stigwood soon after they arrived in Britain.

"We did our nightclub act," says Maurice, "and he watched and listened and never smiled once. Then he said, 'Be at my office at six o'clock,' and we were, and we signed contracts."

Maurice also looks back with a slight sense of awe on the way he and the rest of the family just packed up and came to Britain, without anything definite to look forward to, on only £200 between them.

"We stayed in a crummy hotel in Hampstead," says Maurice, "and one day my dad went to see the Seekers' manager, Eddie Jarrett, to see if he could help. He said sorry, he couldn't do anything. After that dad went to see Robert Stigwood at Nems—and here we are."

Surprised

There they are, indeed . . . still selling well with "Massachusetts," and not only that, but high in the sky with "World."

Maurice might well be inclined to celebrate this with a great, big, swinging humdinger of a party, except that he isn't that keen on parties.

"I don't mind a celebration now and again," he told me, "—in fact, I'm a bit of a raver. But many times I like to be on my own and play a bit of the old 'Monty Varni'."

"Know something? Everything surprises me. You mention Lu'u, and I'm really surprised. Say a well-known girl record reviewer has got false teeth, and there I am again—really surprised! Some people would shrug and say, 'Oh yeah, so what?' Not me. Everything surprises me."

Maurice loves subtle humour and also doing his own impressions of other people, but there's an intensely serious side to him. When he heard about the death of Brian Epstein the shock and suddenness of it had a deep and traumatic effect.

Apart from death, the greatest personal blow to him has been failing his driving test three times.

Bitterly, Maurice recalls how in

the middle of the first driving test he took, the examiner said: "You're one of the Bee Gees, aren't you—the ones getting deported?" (This was at the time of work permits trouble regarding Colin Petersen and Vince Melouney.)

"I was just about to say this applied to only two of the members," alleges Maurice, with an acid edge to his tongue, "when this bloke says: 'Then why the hell are you taking your test?'"

"That got me. My blood really boiled, and I thought, 'Right, mate.' I gave it to him at 80. We were going along like there was no tomorrow."

"When he got out, he said, 'Mr. Gibb, I'm happy to say you've failed.'"

More out-of-this-world matters often concern the agile mind of Maurice Gibb, who at 17 admits to feeling far more mature than his years.

He tells of spiritualist seances in which "an English guy named Noel, who was killed in a motor-bike crash when he was 22," has given the Bee Gees advice and prophesied their future in the charts.

Sensible

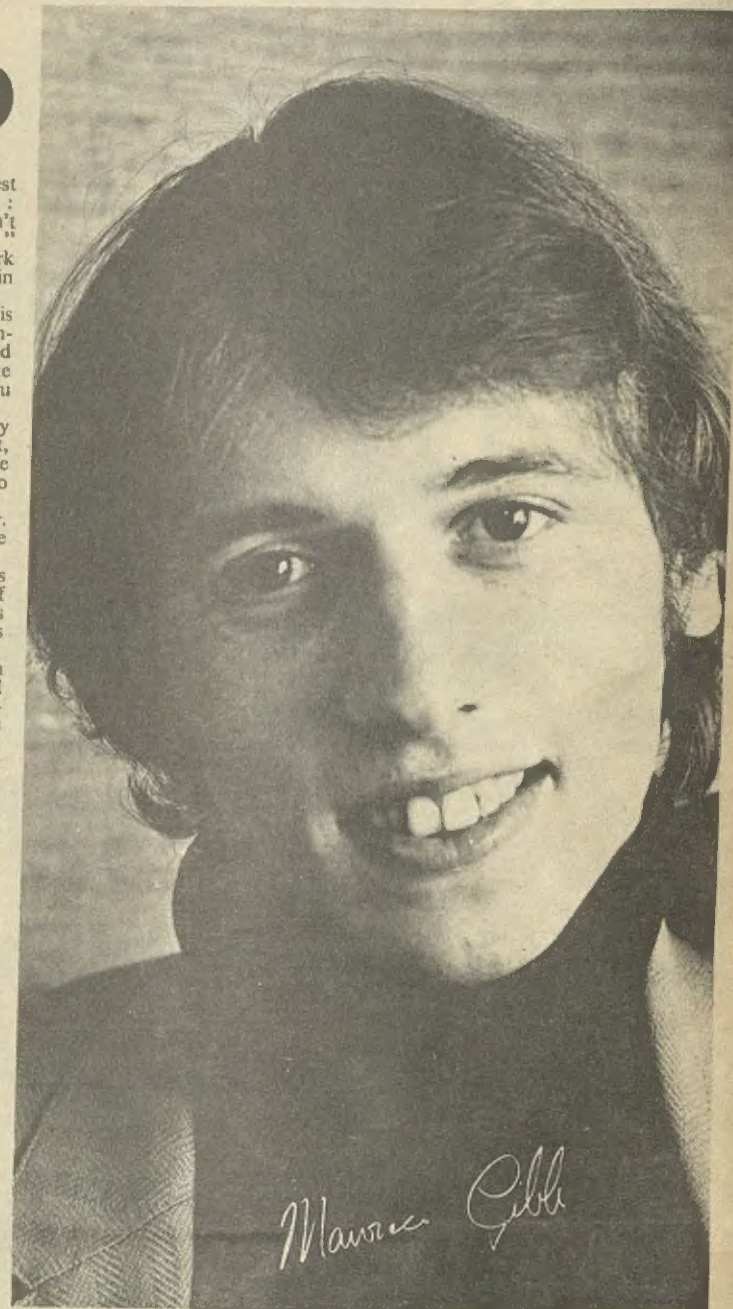
"There was another time," says Maurice, "in which we got in touch with a German baron by means of using a glass and letters of the alphabet. But it didn't really work. Either he couldn't spell, or he couldn't speak English."

The things that worry Maurice include death; his nose; the gold in his front tooth; making a wrong move and embarrassing himself when he's with a girl; and being in clubs and being stared at.

"I hate that," says Maurice. "I used to go to clubs a lot, but I don't like feeling conspicuous. Now I don't go so much, I suppose people will think I'm big-time. But I'm not."

Maurice is right. He isn't. Straightforward, confident, uncertain, impulsive, romantic, nostalgic and the most mature and sensible 17-year-old I've ever met . . . yes.

Big-time . . . never.



4 HITS ON EP

"THOROUGHLY
MODERN
MILLIE"

HITS OF
THE HERD

More Hits of
HARRY
SECOR